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ABSTRACT

Past approaches to public administration, the diminishing distinctions between foreign and domestic policy, the role of the public administrator, and leadership qualities are discussed. As a relatively young discipline, public administration first focused on scientific management (1920's). It then shifted to the art and science of getting things done, and hierarchical organization. As the distinction between the public and private sectors has blurred, public administration has extended beyond government to include the public responsibility of business. The role of public administrators in the 1980's, when distinctions between politics and administration, policy and management, and decision making and action are disappearing, is to bend individual expertise to public purpose. The duties of decision making and public action require public administrators to be generalists; they must be intermediators, clarifiers, codifiers, and managers. The public administrator serves to coordinate the activities of specialists with the solutions to world problems. Role models for generalists and integrators are the administrator of the Marshall Plan, Paul Hoffman, and a politician, Hubert H. Humphrey. (KC)

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THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

An address to the American Society of Public Administration
1982 National Conference

by

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THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Harlan Cleveland

I

We are meeting in Hawaii, within sight of Waikiki Beach, and I ask myself: Why are we all here, here in this hotel ballroom instead of out enjoying the sun and challenging the surf? The reason, you will as good public servants be glad to know, is guilt.

Some years ago I introduced Mayor John Lindsay of New York to a huge convention of the National League of Cities, in another Waikiki hotel ballroom. Just before the session got under way, I was standing with Mayor Lindsay and several other well-known mayors, and I asked them if the convention schedule gave them any time to relax on the beach. They looked at me incredulously. "Are you kidding?" one of the mayors replied. "CBS, NBC and ABC all have cameras down there on the beach, just waiting to send home to our local television stations a story about how their political leaders are serving the public weal in their bathing suits."

This session is the announced alternative to goofing off, and I am glad to see that every chair is occupied. Our presence together in this place is rational behavior, explained long ago in one of the parables of Hadji, the Turkish folk philosopher.

Hadji was walking a road one dark night when he saw three men coming. "Oho, they may be robbers." So he jumps over a wall and hides behind a rock. The three see this, are curious, and jump over the wall and find him. "What is wrong?" they ask. "What are you doing here?" Hadji sees the truth. They are not robbers. He says, "Gentlemen, I will tell you why we are all here. I am here because of you, and you are here because of me."

And so we are. You have asked me to speak of the future of Public Administration. Fortunately for you I lack the confidence in my own predictions of some of my futurist friends, those Jeane Dixons with computers who manage to make an exponential curve look like a downbeat. Yet I do keep trying to peer into the future in my own way -- impressionistically, intuitively, admiring the ambiguities and delighting in the uncertainties of what hasn't happened yet. But, I freely admit that I cannot see in the dark.

Hadji, by contrast, said he could see in the dark. Someone said, "Tnat may be so, but why then do you always carry a candle at night?" Hadji said, "Why, to prevent other people from bumping into me!" There's a viable purpose for Public Administration in our time: to hold the candle that enables citizens to avoid bumping into each other.

II

"Public Administration" -- as an organized body of knowledge, insights and hunches about getting things done in the public interest -- is not even as old as the University of Hawaii, which celebrates its 75th birthday tonight. Yet our nonprofession has already struggled through half a dozen stages of developmental growth:

• There was a time, in the '20s and '30s, when Public Administration was Scientific Management, elegant systems hidden from the ugly face of politics, walled off from the tensions, ambiguities and uncertainties of generating consensus for a common line of action. But the New Deal and the War and the postwar need to build new institutions erased the line between politics and administration. The best of the politicians had also to be accomplished executives; city managers and Federal bureau chiefs who still thought politics was someone else's profession did not survive.

• There was a time, in the '40s and '50s, when Public Administration was considered the art and science of getting-it-done, after someone else had decided what to do and why. An engineer named Herbert Hoover did his best, in that last gasp of counter-intuitive thinking called the Second Hoover Commission, to separate the political executives, the Presidential appointees, from the drones and enunuchs below, who

were supposed as good civil servants to define efficiency as getting things done without asking that discomfiting question, "Why?"

But the growing complexity of it all means that no one can know enough to "make policy" and leave it to others to carry out. In an incandescent insight Paul Appleby said it all: "Policy is what is decided at your level and higher."

• There was a time, in ASPA's early decades, when Public Administration was hierarchical organization, diagrammed with square boxes arranged in pyramids. The dynamic flow was supposed to be vertical: recommendations up, orders down.

But for administration to be "public", it had to deal with multiple constituencies, take account of the separation of powers, negotiate with sovereign states and cities and counties at home and sovereign nations abroad. The public executives who survived were those who knew that administration was mostly a matter of dealing, from hour to hour and day to day, with people you don't work for, and who don't work for you -- who knew that in consequence most of the world's work gets done by what the Japanese call consensus, the Indonesians call mushyawara, the Communists call collective leadership and we call committee-work.

• There was even a time when the "public" in Public Administration meant "government," and the business of Business

Administration was business. But in the 1970s the distinction between "private" and "public" became irretrievably blurred.

Each day for half a century past, more and more of the sovereign business of government has been farmed out to the private sector; weapons produced not by government arsenals but by industrial corporations; outer space and foreign aid and housing and highway programs carried out through intricate combinations of contracts, subsidies and incentives; even taxes, government's most sovereign function, collected mostly by nongovernments through the withholding device. (Just think how big the I.R.S. would have to be if it collected taxes the way the Census Bureau collects information: by passing the hat from door to door!) At the same time, private enterprise in some industries has become less private because less enterprising. We live in a time when Lee Iacocca is a civil servant -- underpaid, to be sure, at a dollar a year -- his effective board of directors those three staunch defenders of the enterprise system the Secretary of the Treasury, the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and the Comptroller General of the United States.

The "public" in Public Administration now has to be widened out beyond government to governance -- to include, that is, much of what has come to be called the public responsibility of business, and much of what is done by nonprofit nongovernments as well.

III

• There was a time, not so long ago, when it was possible to believe that policy was actually made by people called policy-makers. The policy-making few made broad rational decisions, it was said (and even taught in schools), the unsung experts and civil servants converted the principles into practices, and the job of the masses was to comply with the regulations, pay their taxes, and re-elect the policy-makers. (Members of Congress and State Legislatures were supposed to have a role in all this, but they were mostly so busy intervening in the internal affairs of executive agencies on behalf of their constituents that the solons had to leave the drafting of legislation to the executive branch.)

But it is now clear that the policy process is the obverse of its popular model. Russell Baker described it in a dialogue with himself a couple of years ago*:

> What does this country need today?
>
> Leadership. The country yearns for new leadership for a new era.
>
> If led, will the country follow?
>
> If given the right kind of leadership, the country will surely follow.
>
> But what kind of leadership is the right kind?
>
> The leadership that leads the country in the direction it wants to take.
>
> And what specific direction does the country want to take?

*New York Times (November 13, 1979)

> Who knows? That's for the leader to figure out. If he's the right kind of leader, he will guess correctly.
>
> .....Am I wrong (Baker concludes) in concluding that it isn't leadership that a country wants in a president, but followership?

High policy -- that is, major shifts in society's sense of direction -- is formed in inchoate consensus by the people at large. Whether it's a matter of turning off a war in Vietnam, protecting disadvantaged categories of people, equalizing opportunity for women, updating immigration policy, slowing the growth of government, or freezing the production and deployment of nuclear weapons -- the people always seem to get there first. The experts and pundits and pollsters and labor leaders and lawyers and doctors and business executives and foundation officers and judges and professors and public executives, many of them chronically afflicted with hardening of the categories, catch up in jerky arthritic moves with all deliberate speed. And then, when the policy decision is long since made, and the experts have finally done the programming, written the editorials, raised the money, painted the directional sign-posts and staged the appropriate media event, the publicity heroes and heroines come forth, the people that People magazine thinks are our leaders, dressed in coats and ties and Paris fashions, to climb aboard the train as it gathers momentum, and announce for all to hear the new direction of march -- speaking by television from the safety of the caboose.

It's more and more obvious: those with visible responsibility for leadership are nearly always too visible to take the responsibility for change -- until it becomes more dangerous to stand there than to move on. "I am a leader," Voltaire wrote, "therefore I must follow."

There are exceptions -- but they are most exceptional. Anwar Sadat was a leader who presumed to break through the barrier of the conventionally expert advice to do nothing cautiously while pretending you are doing something, which is the short story of Middle Eastern politics over the last twenty years. He may have been the last "original" of his generation (which is also my generation). So far as I can see, the successor generation has yet to produce its first.

Who presumes today to get out ahead of the crowd and to speak for humankind and for peace and not simply for some single-issue national constituency? Who tries to speak for all of us as (each in his own way) Woodrow Wilson, or Franklin Roosevelt, or Winston Churchill, or Mahatma Gandhi, or Chou En-lai, or David Ben-Gurion, or Adlai Stevenson, or Paul-Henri Spaak, or John F. Kennedy, or Dag Hammarskjold, or Romulo Betancourt (who also died not long ago, but of natural causes) did in their time? Name ten leaders in their league today. Or if that is too difficult, name three. Or if that is too difficult, I will settle for one.

Our world's visibly responsible leaders, I repeat, are

mostly too conscious of their visibility to get things moving. And that is why Sadat's crowning initiative -- the simple announcement: "I will go to Jerusalem" -- is one of the few acts of personal leadership that I have witnessed in forty years of observing and practicing international politics. It is in the class with Gandhi's actions, or Churchill's rallying cries, or Roosevelt's Lend-Lease proposal, or the Vandenburg Resolution, or General Marshall's speech at Harvard, or Tito's break with the Kremlin, or Kennedy's nuclear test ban proposal, or -- yes -- Nixon's opening to China. There are not very many of them. John Stuart Mill's comment is still up to date: "That so few dare to be eccentric marks the chief danger of the times."

IV

• There was a time when it seemed possible, even useful, to make a clear distinction between "domestic policy" and "foreign policy." Our Founding Fathers, of course, understood perfectly well that in order to protect their newly won independence they had to understand interdependence -- understand, that is, our ticklish relations with Britain, France, and Spain. But for nearly a century, from the 1830s to the 1930s, we were preoccupied as a people with exploring a continent, exploiting our resources and each other in the process. International developments were at the margin, and even the First World War was only a bloody aberration from an isolationist norm.

But after the Second World War, armed with a powerful economy, superpower status, and a superweapon we then thought might have some military value, the American people found that everything they did was partly "international affairs" -- that for Americans, public policy was more and more interconnected, interdepartmental, interdisciplinary and international.

Indeed, at the White House level, there is no such thing as a policy issue which is not partly international.

What we mostly want from other countries -- and what they mostly want from us -- is changes in "domestic" preconceptions, priorities, policies, and practices. By the same token, most of the so-called "domestic policy" actions we take -- decisions about the level of agricultural subsidies, the direction of research and development, the rescue of uncompetitive companies, the degree of emphasis on energy conservation, the supply of U.S. dollars, the amount of unemployment we will stand for, the size and shape of our budget deficit, and many, many others -- are enormously important to nearly every other nation on earth. Yet the U.S. Government is unambigously divided between "domestic" and "foreign" affairs. To paraphrase Gilbert and Sullivan, every matter of public policy is born a little "domestic policy" or a little "foreign policy" -- and is so treated as it grows up through the processes of decision, both in the Executive Branch and on Capitol Hill.

One of the most elementary doctrines about the management of large-scale systems is that a supervisory office should not be organized in the same way as its subordinate offices are -- that, indeed, it should be deliberately organized to cut across the vertical divisions below, in order to throw new light on their interrelationships and inconsistencies before issues come to the top executive for "decision" (which can mean resolution of differences or confirmation of a consensus already reached among subordinates). Each of the Cabinet Departments was established essentially to deal either with national security/foreign policy matters, or with "domestic" policy. Yet the White House has for three decades been organized the same way, coordinating State and Defense and the Intelligence community through a National Security Council (NSC), and channelling the rest of the government through a "Domestic Policy Staff," the lineal successor of a function performed by staff officers under a variety of titles ever since the Truman Administration.

Since the system does not fit the function, dissonance between foreign and domestic policies is normal. Review the history of energy policy, the law of the sea, the sale of arms, the issue of selling grains to the Soviet Union, or the export of nuclear fuels, and you will find plenty of examples of international ramifications unpredicted, ignored, or suppressed.

One example is enough. North America is the centerpiece of a world food system which is not yet delivering enough food

to keep large numbers of people from malnutrition. Yet most Federal farm legislation, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, still tilt toward restricting food production. The idea is to maximize the return to the producers, and there is nothing wrong with that. But the U.S. Government has hardly even started to change the system so that producing to meet world needs (not merely the "effective demand" of the affluent hungry, such as the Russians) is made profitable for the American farmer.

Despite the melding of "domestic" and "international" issues out there in the real world, it is still almost literally true that only one person in the Executive Branch is hired to work on both domestic and foreign policy. We call him President of the United States. And no one occupying that office has organized the White House staff as though foreign and domestic policy were more than distant cousins, let alone Siamese twins.

V

What, then, is the future of Public Administration in the 1980s, the decade of disappearing distinctions between politics and administration, between policy and management, between getting-it-decided and getting-it-done? What is the public administrator's role in an environment of horizontal relationships, mixed public-private systems and participatory decision-making, where every major problem has to be viewed in global

perspective? What's missing that we, who call ourselves professional administrators but who in Louis Brownlow's tradition should resist the temptation to consider administration a profession, what's missing that Public Administration, with a capital "P" and a capital "A," can supply?

Public Administration, I have argued in the Public Administration Review and elsewhere, is the get-it-all-together function, the glue that binds individual expertise to public purpose. If the people are pointing vaguely to new directions and the publicity heroes are busy polishing their images, the job of getting-it-decided and getting-it-done falls to us, to that crowd of intermediators and clarifiers and codifiers and managers, thinkers and doers alike, who constitute the get-it-all-together profession.

We cannot therefore see Public Administration as focussed on government, or Schools of Public Administration as training schools for government service. At the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, we define "public affairs" not as another discipline competing for academic preferment, nor yet as another self-contained profession in the tradition of medicine, business and the law. We define "public affairs" as the public responsibility, the public action aspect of every discipline and every profession. In the University of Minnesota, we see our Institute not as another vertical college (though it has collegiate status) but as a horizontal, cut-across function working through joint ventures with every major University unit.

The same should be true of Public Administration in the society at large. The public administrators are not only the government's management specialists; they are the men and women who integrate the specialists in policies and actions that take account of the turbulent environment of change which is the burden and the glory of the time we live in.

VI

It's hard, I find, to advocate integrative thinking without seeming to put down experts. So in my capacity as a card-carrying generalist I will pause for a moment to make clear that some of my best friends are experts.

The generalist card I carry, as some of you will know, is the Prix de Talloires, a sizeable cash prize which demonstrates that it pays, after all, to be a generalist.

Now you probably didn't know there <u>was</u> a prize for being a generalist and as a matter of fact there wasn't, until last year. A group of bright Swiss businessmen and other European leaders meet each year at a little place called Talloires, on the shores of Lake Annecy -- which, because of enormous efforts by the local public authorities, is now said to be the purest lake in the world when it had been one of the most polluted. They meet at this place from year to year to try to think for a few intensive days about the state of the world.

Last year they decided that one trouble with the state of the world was that there were too many experts and not enough generalists and that all the prizes were going to the experts. So they decided to establish a prize for being a generalist and in the spirit of Atlantic politics they very wisely split the Prix de Talloires for the first year between a Frenchman and an American. I got half the prize. (Unfortunately, they did not double the stipend.) I shared it with the dean of French futurists, Bertrand de Jouvenel.

The prize was given in the monastery of an old abbey which is said to have had the highest productivity of saints of any monastery on earth. More saints, St. Bernard and St. Germain and many others, have come out of there than anywhere; they practiced there a medieval form of public administration. Despite my consequent claim to impressively saintly credentials, I do not hold with Christopher Fry in the matter of haloes. You may remember in The Lady's Not For Burning he wrote: "What, after all, is a halo? It's only one more thing to keep clean."

I told them that I would keep it clean but that I would also treasure the Prix de Talloires because of its uniqueness. It is for bringing the experts and their expertise together in an effort to make sense, to make progress, to make the whole more valuable than the sum of its parts -- that's what they said about it. All the other world prizes are for chopping knowledge into pieces -- and the more unprecedentedly small the piece, it seems, the greater the reward.

Breadth, I think, is the indispensable quality of leadership. But no successful leader makes the mistake of thinking that breadth is the opposite of depth. Everything really is related to everything else and the person who plumbs the depths of his or her own speciality finds more and more connections with every other speciality. The astronomers who reach far back in time to a "big bang" must in scholarly honesty ask the humanistic next questions. Why the bang? Who set it off? What does it mean? And so they come by the circuitous route of pure reason to conclusions that can only be acts of faith.

A person who is willing without embarrassment to be styled a generalist is constantly impressed with the importance of somebody getting to the bottom of specialized questions. The leader as manager, indeed, is very likely to be unsuccessful unless he or she has once been an expert, unless he or she is good at judging whether the experts who stream through the office and create the information entropy on his or her desk are getting to the bottom of their subjects.

I would wish, therefore, carefully not to imply that specialization and disciplinary expertness are less worthy than integrated thought, or that expertness is passé and obsolescent. A world of coordinators would be as much of a mess as a world of specialists. The need is to stir them together in the stew of social theory and action, which means that these actors on the stage of society have to learn to live with each

other in a symbiosis of mutual respect, of mutual dependency. But in that mutual relationship the leading edge, the front line of attack on the world's problems, has to be the integrators, those whose function it is to say where to go and when and why.

VII

Who are these integrators? Are they concepts, or real-life people?

Each of us has known some public executives, public philosophers, public law-makers who epitomize the integrative function. Not altogether at random, I will mention four of my own role-models: Paul Hoffman, Jean Monnet, Hubert Humphrey and Barbara Ward -- all of them departed this life, all leaving an indelible mark on their time and on those of us who knew them.

Each of them, in their differing ways, illustrate the upbeat, can-do spirit of generalist leadership. They were all people who in their time asked not only "Why?" but "Why not?" They all learned enough about enough subjects to use expertise without being mesmerized by the experts. They all acted as if everything were related to everything else. They all acted out by instinct the ethic of ecology expressed so well when Alfred North Whitehead* spoke of "that appreciation of the

*The Aims of Education (New York: MacMillan, 1929)

structure of ideas which requires an eye for the whole chessboard, the bearing of one set of ideas upon another."

Paul Hoffman, who was president of Studebaker before he ran the Marshall Plan for European Recovery, started his working life running a filling station. Like most of the best people I have known, he never forgot the things that he learned in the earlier parts of his life and he was able to relate them to the later parts.

I remember when I worked for him in the Marshall Plan he came into a staff meeting and said: "Listen. We all really ought to answer every letter the day it comes in." Now, to a group of Washington bureaucrats, that was a rather stirring comment; it stirred a lot of resistance. Hoffman's point was that you don't have to give a substantive answer; you should answer the letter and just say: "We got your letter and we're working on it." It would give the people an idea that you're there. He said: "When I worked in a filling station, I found that if somebody came and sat at the pump for three or four minutes and nobody paid any attention to him he would go away and never come back. But if you gave him a big hello and said 'There are a few people ahead of you, but I'll get to you just as soon as I can,' he'd sit there perfectly happily for a quarter of an hour." A very important lesson for us bureaucrats!

Perhaps because he had been a major executive and a major

business leader before he came into the government to run the Marshall Plan, Paul Hoffman had a well-developed sense of personal confidence. More than that, he had a feeling that whatever was wrong in the organization of the U.S. government, or in Europe, it was always his turn to do something about it. It was never the moment for him to sit down and wait for somebody else to do something. He always felt that somehow he should be taking the initiative.

But it was not always his turn to take the credit for his initiatives. In fact, it almost never was. One of the most extraordinary lessons in human relations I ever witnessed in my life was watching Hoffman work with Averell Harriman who was in charge of the Marshall Plan in Europe and who kept implying that he was in charge of the Marshall Plan. Hoffman never called him on it, and it never seemed to bother him. That wouldn't have been true of most top administrators. I watched Dean Rusk work in a similar way as Secretary of State when Adlai Stevenson was the Ambassador to the U.N. For most countries, the Foreign Minister goes to New York and makes the opening speech at the U.N. General Assembly. Dean Rusk never did that. He said "We have got the world's greatest megaphone as Ambassador to the United Nations; there's no point in my going up there and elbowing him aside." So Adlai Stevenson would make the opening U.S. speech. The next day, the Secretary of State would turn up for a couple of weeks of quiet

bilateral diplomacy with the other Foreign Ministers who were in New York.

Most of all, I was struck with the fact that, with Paul Hoffman, there was no veneer, no wax exterior, no dissembling, no "side." There was not one thing going on inside and something different going on outside -- what you might call the Richard Nixon syndrome. But it is very difficult always to say what you mean, and mean what you say. So when I once heard somebody say of Hoffman that he was made of the same stuff inside and out, I always thought that was the nicest thing that could be said of anybody.

Jean Monnet, too, was made of the same stuff all the way through, inside and out. I could as easily have cited Mahatma Gandhi who single-mindedly devoted himself to ending British colonial rule in the Indian Subcontinent; or Chaim Weizmann, who single-mindedly drove toward a Jewish homeland. But Monnet's case should be particularly interesting to public administrators because he made a deliberate choice in middle life to stay <u>out</u> of government so he could push the integration of Western Europe. He didn't get as far as he hoped, but he achieved more than most of us dared hope -- because he had a vision, a strategy, and a masterly sense of tactics and timing. It was these -- vision, strategy, timing -- that moved "Europe" from an idea to a working Community. If you want to see the very model of an integrative man in action, read Jean Monnet's

Memoirs -- certainly one of the great books about public administration written in this century.

Hubert Humphrey could qualify for a list of public service role-models on any of several counts -- the courage to innovate, like Anwar Sadat; the integrity of the person, like Paul Hoffman; the man of integrative action, like Jean Monnet. Besides, I now have an institutional excuse for bringing him into the conversation.

(I must tell you, by the way, that it is a substantial fringe benefit of my job to be able to operate in his name. For one thing, when his name comes up, people smile. Now I can imagine acting in memory and honor of other statesmen I have known; people might be impressed, they wouldn't smile.)

But for me, Humphrey is a public service role model because he was literally interested in everything. He was blessed with an intellectual curiosity that embraced the world, spanned the oceans, and extended into outer space. As a "situation-as-a-whole" person, he felt a personal responsibility for growing more food, making useful goods, distributing wealth fairly, creating better jobs, combatting inflation, managing government, and ensuring international peace. Everything was his personal responsibility. We need about a million more people like him. In my judgment American higher education is not doing nearly enough about this, which is why I decided to go back to a university to see what I could do about it.

Finally, Barbara Ward is on my list of role-models not only because the list obviously needed some affirmative action, but because for some forty years or so she was the voice of vision in international and, particularly, in North-South affairs. I will conclude by reading a few sentences of something she wrote just ten years ago*:

> ".....the two worlds of man, the biosphere of his inheritance and the technosphere of his creation, are out of balance, indeed, potentially in deep conflict. And man is in the middle. This is the hinge of history at which we stand. The door of the future opening onto a crisis more sudden, more global, more inescapable, more bewildering than any ever encountered by the human species. And one which will take decisive shape within the life span of children who are already born. No problem is insoluble in the creation of a balanced and conserving planet, save humanity itself. Can it reach in time the vision of joint survival? Can its inescapable physical inter-dependence, the chief new insight of our century, induce that vision? We do not know. We have the duty to hope."

That duty -- to hope and to do something about it -- is, or had better be, the frontier of public administration.

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*Only One Earth (New York: Norton, 1972)